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DON W. KLEINE:

Felix Krull as Fairy Tale Hero

> "The present-day descendant of the sea-lily, the lily star, is attached to the ground by a stem only during its youth. After that it frees itself, emancipates itself, and goes off adventurously swimming and clambering along the coasts. Forgive me for this association of ideas, but like a modern sea lily you have freed yourself from your stem and are now off on a tour of inspection. One is tempted to give advice to this novice at locomotion . . . Allow me: Kuckuck."
>
> For a moment I thought something was the matter with him, and then I understood. Although much older than I, he had introduced himself.
>
> "Venosta," I hastened to reply with an oblique bow, as I was just then being served fish on my left.

Though he is indeed on a tour of inspection, Professor Kuckuck's young protegé is neither a novice at motion nor in need of advice. Felix Krull, connoisseur of misidentities, is once again studying what it means to be somebody else. For he is at this very moment a false Marquis de Venosta, aboard a train which is speeding him to another rendezvous with himself.

This audacious lily-star was never, even in childhood, attached to the ground by a very firm stem. Almost from infancy he fed lavishly on the delights of impersonation: he was the Kaiser in his go-cart, accepting the homage of his parents; he "dressed up" in the studio of his artist godfather Schimmelpreester; he played sick so convincingly his temperature rose. His father, a gentle *boulevardier manqué,* given to fireworks and banquets, filled the garden

with grottoes and trick mirrors. Even the front door concealed a spring mechanism which played the opening bars of Strauss's *"Freut euch des Lebens."*

When he was fourteen Felix was taken to the operetta in Wiesbaden. A visit to the dressing rooms traumatically marked him. Müller-Rosé, the leading man, an apparition of brightness and charm during the performance, proved upon closer inspection to be highly deficient in physical and mental graces. It was the first, but not the last, time that the apprentice illusionist was to meet the disparity between art and the artist.

His parents' extravagances, meantime, were even further endangering the already wobbly fortunes of the family business—a very bad champagne named *Loreley extra Cuvée*. When Felix was eighteen, the firm went bankrupt. While a boon to the palates of Rhineland wine-drinkers, the failure of *Loreley extra Cuvée* proved the opposite to Felix's father, who discreetly shot himself. Spiritual Counsellor Chateau, however, impressed by Felix's auspicious qualities, gave his father a church burial.

Old Schimmelpreester obtained the promise of a job in a swank Parisian hotel for the penniless Felix. While waiting in Frankfurt for his draft examination, he wandered the streets, vicariously savoring the splendor of the city's fashionable life; Rosza, a fallen woman with a circus background, gave him a less vicarious schooling in her craft. Called at last for army service, Felix feigned epilepsy with astounding virtuosity, and was freed for Paris. At the border, some jewels were accidentally jumbled into his luggage by customs.

In his capacity as elevator boy at the Paris hotel, he soon met the rightful owner of his gratuitous treasures, the novelist Diane Philibert. Since this lady suffered from an aberrant propensity for very young men the comely Felix touched her heart. She constrained him to pocket the rest of her jewels, the proceeds of which enabled him to play the man about town while off duty. Felix's talents rapidly made themselves known to the hotel's management and he was made a waiter. He charmed the clientele, and was forced to dissuade two of them—Lord Strathbogie, a Scotch noble, and Miss Twentyman, an English heiress—from eloping with their beguiling waiter. Another patron, however, soon made Felix an offer more in keeping with his true vocation. The young Marquis de Venosta, dazzled by an actress named Zaza but compelled, on pain of disinheritance, to go around the world without her, suggested

they exchange roles for a year. The proposal captured Felix's imagination. He resigned his hotel post, exchanged his savings for Venosta's letter of credit, and boarded the Lisbon Express, on which he has just met Professor Kuckuck, who is giving him a lecture on biology, under the impression that he is a marquis and thus worthy of such dark knowledge.

The deception of Kuckuck is not the last of our hero's marvelous mendacities. Being a sham Venosta he is naturally eager to find a sham Zaza. In Lisbon he does so, in the person of Kuckuck's daughter, a voluptuous prig named Zouzou. Felix lays siege to both Zouzou and her mother—he has always been partial to double images—meantime captivating the Portuguese court on his days off. Felix's attentions to the Kuckucks meets the success inevitable to all his enterprises: we leave him enjoying the entranced admiration of both ladies.

That this is to be the last "bypath" seems a glum chance for a lily-star hitherto so promising. Felix is forever frozen in the embrace of Mme. Kuckuck now, for Thomas Mann is dead. The first part of *Bekentnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull,* published in 1954 and translated in 1955 as *Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man,* is unfortunately the final part too. Widely acclaimed for stunning virtuosity and philosophic sweep, Mann's last novel owes much of its appeal to the fact that its hero is simply the most engaging hero in all Mann's work. For one thing, his swindles never hurt anyone. At the same time, there is a remarkable *innerness* to his impostures; once he calls himself Venosta a part of him has indeed become Venosta. We are impressed, again, by his peculiar disinterestedness. Here is no workaday confidence man, the subterfuges of whom are merely the means to loot; the subterfuges are themselves the loot. Nor is Felix the plausible blackguard familiar in comic literature, whose self-deceiving sophistries charm his guilt away. Felix never rationalizes and his sight is everywhere keen. The reader begins to suspect before long that Felix's chicanery is in a curious way very moral.

> It is a favorite theory of mine that every deception which fails to have a higher truth at its root and is simply a barefaced lie is by that very fact so grossly palpable that nobody can fail to see through it. Only one kind of lie has a chance of being effective: that which in no way deserves to be called deceit, but is the product of a lively imagination which has not yet entered wholly into the realm of the actual and acquired those tangible signs by which alone it can be appraised at its proper worth.

Which is only to say that *Felix Krull* is a novel about an artist. It is a signal irony of this enormously adult book that the artist is perforce a swindler in a society which imagines itself to be based on positivistic reality. The images of the artist show this positivism to be itself merely a metaphor referring to a deeper reality. Teaching society that facts are really dreams, he is necessarily branded a criminal liar. In self-defense, therefore, Felix compounds his felony by concealing it. He pretends to buy society at its positivistic face value. The deception itself is high art, for to succeed it must exploit the poetry inherent in all social arrangements.

His imaginative grasp of social roles forestalls Felix's ever *believing* in any one of them enough to be frozen there. He senses the ludicrous gap between a real person and his fictitious role (partly because he is so eminently equipped to know what a *person* is), yet senses the spirituality of that role's very fictitiousness. Which is perhaps just a way of saying that a railroad conductor is not a poet precisely because he doesn't know it:

> This honest man who punched my valid ticket earned his livelihood thereby; somewhere a home awaited him—there was a wedding ring on his finger—he had a wife and children. But I had to behave as though the thought of his human associations could never occur to me, and any question about them, revealing that I did not regard him simply as a convenient marionette, would have been completely out of order.

Society, being eminently theatrical, is highly suited to the exercise of Felix's singular skills. His protean adaptability permits him to play all the parts in the repertory. He recognizes that the waiter contains the hotel.

> With a change of clothes and make-up, the servitors might often just as well have been the masters, and many of those who lounged in the deep wicker chairs, smoking their cigarettes, might have played the waiter. It was pure accident that the reverse was the fact, an accident of wealth; for an aristocracy of money is an accidental and interchangeable aristocracy.

If convention is a concerted apathy to the ambivalence between masks and men, the knowledge that this apathy can lead to a comedy of errors is unconventional knowledge. Quite naturally, Felix is driven to "hypocrisy."

But how sincere is sincerity? Felix's success at least partly derives from the fact that his victims are unwittingly confidence men too who, unlike Felix, deceive themselves as well as others. They really believe that their manners are their morals. They are

in perpetual masquerade with a lifetime suspension of disbelief at their own performances. "Sincerity"—surely an age in which our churches seem like ad agencies and our ad agencies seem like churches has hardened us to the term—is the measure of their self-deceptive faith in the simplicity of life. The artist cannot appear before them in his own person: they will find his irony "insincere" because they do not understand it. They fall easy prey, however, to a Felix who *seems* sincere, that is, uncomplicated. In fact, they eagerly conspire to believe him sincere, for this is to reassure themselves in the validity of convention.

Felix's more perceptive subjects are no exception to this rule of self-seduction. While they may not deceive themselves by a simplified conception of social role, they often deceive themselves just the same by an excessively rigid self-image, in this case succumbing to spells Felix never intended to cast. Felix becomes a mirror of their perversion, and the great illusionist ludicrously and unsuccessfully tries to cure them of their illusion. Indeed, the errant lily-star meets some strange fish. Diane Philibert, for example, while an artist herself is nevertheless quite solemn in her grotesque ideal of love, quite blind to its real sentimentality. She has managed to convince herself that if one never grows up one will never die *("La fleur de ta jeunesse remplit mon coeur agé d'une éternelle ivresse").* Like most perverts, she is an evangelist: Felix's appeal to her common sense is swept away in a torrent of stagy eloquence. Our hero, in short, is no Tartuffe. On the contrary he seems a kind of Diogenes in this blindman's buff of fumbling frauds, frauds bewitched by convention like the railroad conductor or, like Diane, by an *idée fixe.* His duplicity is, paradoxically, a kind of honesty to the myriad hazards and dubieties of existence.

If this honesty requires the writer to eschew narrow commitments in the exercise of his art, it equally requires that Felix in the exercise of *his* art keep moving across the spectrum of social possibilities. An international hotel fulfills this condition: it is the whole wide world. As a waiter—one who brings people what they want, that is, deceives them in the manner to which they are accustomed—he is spatially fixed, yet permitted the consolations of picaresque. Of course, being a Sunday child bent on worldly advancement as well as an artist greedy for fresh vibrations, Felix gladly submits his craft to the catalyst of space once Venosta offers him the chance. In Paris the world passed before him; now, like a more traditional *picaro,* he will pass before the world.

In his recent article, "Variations on Picaresque *(Felix Krull)*" (*Sewanee Review,* Autumn, 1958), R. B. Heilman treats the book as a type of picaresque—an undeniably sound procedure up to a certain point. But Mann's novel tends to be several things at once, and can be staked out in more than one way. Like its hero the work is a chameleon, shifting its hue (within a range of textual validity) to suit our strategy. I feel that *Felix Krull* is more than a picaresque of the artist: the chemistry of its diverse pressures also fits the novel to certain criteria of the fairy tale. Many of those elements which Mr. Heilman calls picaresque, in other words, can be approached with equal profit as aspects of fairy tale. Mann has scattered hints of this throughout the book, most obviously by frequent references to "good fairies" or "fairy tale kingdoms." Felix, like the fairy tale hero, is repeatedly shown, both explicitly and implicitly, to be elect. His name, in fact, means lucky: he has a rare "gift of responsiveness to the smallest and even the most commonplace pleasures that has always made me consider truly appropriate my first and real Christian name, Felix." Endowed with mystic advantages, Felix enjoys arcane allies. He has a fairy godparent. In an unwritten sequel, Schimmelpreester, like a conscientious fairy godfather, would have snatched his ward from certain disaster. In the present novel Felix's parent artificer sends him off to try his fortunes. Arriving in Paris Felix finds an additional ally when an old woman whom he asks for directions pats him on the cheek and pronounces, "*Dieu vous bénisse, mon enfant!*" Apprehending the occult ritualism of the magical crone's benediction, Felix passes it on to the page-boy in the hotel. He subsequently encounters another mock-supernatural patron in Professor Kuckuck: "His description of the earth as a star combined with the quality of his eyes made a strange impression on me. Besides, the adjective 'present' which he had applied to the earth's inhabitants immediately aroused in me a feeling of significance and vastness. And yet his manner of speech and the expressions he used were very much those one uses with a child, a favoured child, to be sure; they held a touch of affectionate teasing." Igniting Felix's sensibility to wider vocational vistas (the heavens enhance his *significance*), Kuckuck like Schimmelpreester ushers him into a new set of adventures.

A positivistic world would abolish magic by calling it chance. Felix knows better. That Spiritual Counsellor Chateau, Rosza and Mlle. Philibert should all praise his voice is more than a coincidence encouraged by an agreeable voice. Felix sees that the coincidence

and the voice are both tokens of his mysterious dispensation. Nor is it mere lame chance that the strangely star-eyed Kuckuck (whose mercies Felix seems about to reward in such a singular fashion at at the end of the book) should sponsor his lily-star through the starry mazes of astronomy, or that he should have a daughter who comes close to being Zaza's namesake. Felix, sensing his election, rightly glimpses in such convergences of character and coincidence an uncanny portent.

It is interesting to observe how the fairy tale element illuminates the novel's more general issues: the fairy tale hero, for instance, travels in a realm of illusions and transformations. But the fairy tale, we are assured by literary historians, reflects the real world. The realm through which Felix passes—society—is almost as bewitched as fairyland. Illusion is its basic economic strategy: buying packaged symbols, we frequently end with fearfully bad commodities. *Loreley extra Cuvée* deserves the title. Its pompous bottle hardly betrays the atrocious quality of the contents ("The compressed corks were secured with silver wire and gilt cords fastened with purplish-red wax; there was, moreover, an impressive round seal"). If society is a place of illusions, it is one of occult transformations too. It subsists, we suggested earlier, on the necessary fiction of social role. But social role is, after all, a fiction; its players do lead a double life, regardless of how imperfectly they sense its doubleness. While only a lunatic entirely believes this fiction, the moment when the social mask slips to reveal the actor beneath can, if it is timely enough not to be ignored, breed consternation in the conventional heart. If it discloses a real contradiction between mask and actor, especially if the contradiction seems intentional, it is even apt to inspire moral indignation. And such a transformation can indeed seem almost magical to the conventional spectator. While the rational part of him knew the magic to be latent all along, the social, superstitious part of him feels the transformation almost as a diabolic legerdemain contrived to cheat him of his easy categories. This moment when the mask slips is often, we need hardly say, infinitely thrilling to the novelist. Felix, who has more to lose than the novelist since his art is his own life, recoils from Philibert's and Strathbogie's perversions. Yet at the same time—since he is violently attracted to the mimetic aspect of convention, to the magic it secretes—he revels in the hypocrisy their perversions necessitate, in the magic shift from the public to the private self.

Society, then, is a Wandering Wood. But how does one *travel* through a Wandering Wood? Most citizens, ensnared in externals, only imagine themselves traveling. The artist, however, is happily endowed, Mann suggests, with the ability to see the real woods despite its amorphous trees. Felix knows necromancy to be the art of disguises and, himself the arch-necromancer, sees through all disguises. Unlike the mesmerized man of convention, he knows the world to be enchanted. He is consequently enabled to hold his terrain steady and keep going. Yet Felix sees the reality beyond appearance only because of his rapturous belief in the reality of appearance. We remarked earlier that the writer intuits the poetry of social role. Like the fairy tale hero, therefore, Felix has implicit faith in the magical framework within which he moves. On professional grounds he is naturally a social conservative, one who likes chatting with policemen. As Miss Twentyman alarmingly clamors for his affections we observe him defending the very structure he exploits and subverts, urging that her love is "'nothing but an optical illusion arising principally from this tail-coat *à la* Saint James and Albany with its velvet trim and gold buttons, which is only an adornment concealing my lowly state.'" The joke, of course, is that Miss Twentyman *has* momentarily overcome optical illusion; her summery crush discloses the prince in livery, albeit accidentally. But optical illusion, the product of eighteen years' careful conditioning, is her real self, one to which she would soon revert in any case. Felix's lie, as usual, happens to be true: for most people, the wood is meant to wander.

But Felix's interest in society is, eventually, ontological; society is *natural*. The hero's meeting with Kuckuck marks a turn in the novel. Up to then he had drifted from theater to theater—from the opera in Wiesbaden to the wax-gallery in Paris to the circus. But now, in the most spacious theater of all, the museum of natural history, he discovers that the universe, like society, is enchanted. Appearances cryptically erupt, glimmer a few eons and then, uncannily, flicker out. This is transcendental masquerade, peopled like society with shifting entities. And of course Felix is not magnetized to scientific truths for their own sake. To view such truths mechanistically, to imagine that since they are governed by physical laws the death of a species or birth of a star is not in any sense cryptic, is to fall prey to enchantment just as surely as to believe that a waiter is only a waiter. Felix seizes, characteristically, upon scientific truth for the sake of the dreams which mask it. He is overjoyed to find that his impostures have a cosmic precedent.

If the realm in which our hero travels is bewitched, then, it is equally true that, as we have suggested, such a traveler as Felix contrives his own fairy tale as he goes along. The artist is, clearly, himself the magician, the maker of appearances. In a sense, therefore, Felix is not lucky at all or rather, once set going he earns his luck. He thus declines Strathbogie's offer of adoption partly because he has not aimed for it, and chooses instead to stick with "free play and dreams, self-created and self-sufficient, dependent, that is, only on imagination." The knight-errant must conquer his dragon single-handedly. That dragon is, literally, the specter of Müller-Rosé unbraced. Felix must reconcile art to the death that man, for all his play-acting, carries in him from birth. Schimmelpreester sourly argues for the dragon long before Felix's adventures have begun: "'Nature,' he would say, 'is nothing but mould and corruption, and I am her high priest. The high priest of mould, that's the real meaning of Schimmelpreester. But why I am called Felix, God only knows.'" But Zouzou is the dragon's most eloquent spokesman. She challenges the very basis of art with her verse of spiritual instruction: "However fair and smooth the skin/Stench and corruption lie within." In Zouzou the ascetic element of the Christian heritage speaks with disconcerting authority. Yet the lies on which Felix's career have been founded are accurate lies; Zouzou's truths distort human experience. Unable to answer her overwhelming question, Felix can at least ask one equally overwhelming, "But what would become of life and what would become of joy—without which there can be no life—if appearance and the surface world of the senses no longer counted for anything?"

The dragon cannot be slain, for mortality is immortal. Yet it can be domesticated. For all his theoretical bleakness Schimmelpreester "painted the mildew with devotion." Felix *made* his temperature rise when he played hookey. Müller-Rosé triumphed over carbuncles and bad temper to meet the dreams of gaping shopgirls. So a glowworm is as much glow as it is worm:

> For when you come to think of it, which is the real shape of the glowworm: the insignificant little creature crawling about on the palm of your hand, or the poetic spark that swims through the summer night? Who would presume to say? Rather recall the picture you saw before: the giant swarm of poor moths and gnats, rushing silently and madly into the enticing flame! What unanimity in agreeing to let oneself be deceived! Here quite clearly there is in operation a general human need, implanted by God Himself in human nature, which Müller-Rosé's abilities are created to satisfy.

Mlle. Philibert discovers our hero to be Hermes, suave god of thieves, because at the moment she happens to be in need of a thief. Hermes was a more versatile deity than that. He was a god of roads, partial to tours of inspection; he was a god of commerce, invention and cunning. But he was above all the messenger from Olympus, mediator between two worlds. As Kuckuck describes him to an enthralled Felix, Hermes was "'the golden mean of human stature, neither too large nor too small.'" Yet man himself, Kuckuck adds, is the golden mean of cosmic stature: "'They say that the largest material body, a red giant star, is exactly as much larger than a man as the tiniest element in an atom, something that would have to be magnified a hundred billion times to become visible, is smaller than he.'" If the artist, in other words, is the privileged hero of a fairy tale, it is only because he is the most human member of a race of Sunday Children. Visiting the Neanderthals in Kuckuck's museum, Felix is convinced that "'they already knew—and were discussing as they squatted there—that they already knew they were made of finer clay.'" It is a truism of anthropology that man is a symbolizing creature; the need "implanted by God Himself in human nature," man's need, that is, to make nature human, is universal. Felix pays his fellow artists an ultimate tribute, for in a very real sense he makes them the gift of themselves.

To conclude: the issues of *Felix Krull* exceed those of picaresque, declare themselves in the mock-supernatural effects of burlesque fairy tale. This is a natural outgrowth of the fact that our picaro is also an artist; *Künstlerroman* gives the hero his magical immunities, picaresque (fairy tale heroes, like *picaros,* must travel) puts him on the road. The resultant interplay between the secular references of picaresque and the occult references of fairy tale accounts for the book's curiously charmed, entranced quality. The privilege of seeing the "ordinary" world so transfigured secures for the reader not merely the pleasure of suspended adult responsibility, but also permits him to glimpse the imaginative possibilities of everyday existence ("How inventive life is! Lending substance to airy nothings, it brings our childhood dreams to pass"). At the same time, fairy tale equips the work with a link to its deeper issues. Indeed, Mann's novel asks questions about man's role in the universe which picaresque or social satire simply does not ask. It does not seem entirely specious, therefore, to assert that Mann intended the fairy tale device to embody his perception of how the mimetic nature of social arrangements is essentially and unsuspectedly spiritual, of how the

human longing for magic can inhabit even the most materialistic aspects of modern capitalism. This longing makes Felix's subjects willingly suspend their disbelief, deny that they are being fooled at all: his art is a successful collaboration. The mission of Mann's fairy tale hero thus carries him to the source of all fairy tales in the mythos of language. It is the longest trip on record, but its fruits are worth the passage, for, traversing the light miles that lie between the heart and its wishes, he retrieves the unity of human experience.

HYAM PLUTZIK:

The Dream about Our Master, William Shakespeare

This midnight dream whispered to me:
Be swift as a runner, take the lane
Into the green mystery
Beyond the farm and haystack at Stone.
You leave tomorrow, not to return.

Hands that were fastened in a vise,
A useless body, rooted feet,
While time like a bell thundered the loss,
Witnessed the closing of the gate.
Thus sleep and waking both betrayed.

I had one glimpse: In a close of shadow
There rose the form of a manor-house,
And in a corner a curtained window.
All was lost in a well of trees,
Yet I knew for certain this was the place.

If the hound of air, the ropes of shade,
And the gate between that is no gate,
Had not so held me and delayed
These cowardly limbs of bone and blood,
I would have met him as he lived!

JOHN BERRY:

A Man

i

He had climbed Everest,
Annapurna and Kinchinjunga,
But had not been sufficiently considerate
To report these acts.

ii

He had lost his ears, nose and hair,
Three-fifths of his fingers
And all of his toes.
His other extremities remained
And were terrible.

iii

He had read Goethe and Gibbon.
Military strategy interested him.

iv

He was insensitive to all suffering
Except that which was directly caused
By the elements, war and physical disaster.

v

His idea of humor
Was anybody's narrative
Of psychological complications.
At this, his head would crack open
With sudden laughter, like the head
Of a statue that had just been struck
By lightning.

vi

The sound of his laugh
Was not the sound of thunder.
It was perhaps closest to
The agonized and agonizing bray
Of a coupling mule.
With that laugh he well knew
How to start an avalanche.

vii

After the cataclysm of his laugh
(I fancied I could see flakes
Of encrusted salt
Falling from his seamed cheeks)
He would resume his granite-like composure.

viii

He was neither cruel nor gentle,
Neither arrogant nor humble,
Neither-nor! — things had gone
Too far with him for this sort
Of dialectical fol-de-rol.
It is not easy to make
A true postulate about him.

ix

His actions were monolithic,
Impersonal and decisive.
They required no thought,
Yet they were wholly logical—
And this brings me to the argument
I had with a Tibetan lama about him.

x

The lama said: "I think that,
In a special sense, his will is in
Complete accord with the will of God—

In the sense that Nature is.
You may say he is dehumanized.
Yet I think of him as a man
Who has been seduced by God."

Those Tibetans are a queer lot.
They never bathe (unlike the Indians,
Who bathe every day), and
They leave the family bones lying around
On the floor and in the yard
So the children can play with them.
They believe in the unity of death and life.
They are a cheerful people, but
They put rancid butter in their tea,
And I tell you
It is abominable.

One Snowy Night

One snowy night a madman
Took me to his grotto deep in the woods
And fed me out of his secret hoard.

He said: "I need lots and lots of fuel,
Because I have a high rate of metabolism.
That is why I steal."

He sat there grinning like a fire
And watched me from his throne of food.
As I ate, I felt him chopping me.

I said: "If it's love you want, take it
While I chew. I never got anything free."
"Only fuel," he said. "A man must burn."

The Goldfinch Motif

Every day the goldfinch carried
A drop of water in its bill,
Down into Hell, to moisten
The parched lips of the damned.

Nothing like a firehose,
But there you have it.
In those days (the Middle Ages)
They did not know how
To arrange things.

Photo

This is my child,
This is my wife,
This is my husband,
These are my ancestors,
These are my descendants.

The blur in the middle,
That is a stranger.
He moved.

RAINER BRAMBACH:

Two Poems

Translated by Felix Anselm

The Tree

Ever since I've been living in a far out
house in the project,
a tree has been growing from the cellar

through floor and attic.
Leaves hang like flags
out of all windows,

the crown swings
over the moss-grey roof.

I live carefree in the midst of branches,
the woodcutting block rotting in the yard,
the saw rusting in the shed.
The neighbors, to be sure, call to each other,
"His house is like our houses,
what is the fool cheerful about?
Listen to him singing in the morning, talking
and laughing at dusk!"

The tree grows.

Portrait of a Young Man

A few volumes of poetry on the shelf in the attic,
the lilt of a song I whistle
while working the sandstone, and
on rainy Sundays a stroll through
the art gallery.

In a side room—hardly noticed—the portrait
of a young man around 1470, Dutch school,
somewhat rustic, perhaps a horse-groom
or a stone-mason.

That was when my portrait was painted.
Has much time
passed since?
Oh this late autumn is as chilly as then,
the sound of the rain
has not changed,
through the noon of only yesterday's summery quarries
pale leaves fall.

WILLIAM KELLEY, Jr.:

Spring Planting

For Nana

The boy was crossing the street, clutching the long, tapering, mud-colored cigars in his small hands when what looked to him like a coal truck came over the ridge to the east of town and started down hill, gaining speed, its wheels straddling the white broken line. The truck was large, black, square, its back heaped high with white crystals that shifted and glistened in the late morning sun. Invisible behind the spattered windshield, the driver jammed the brakes and shifted down so that the truck convulsed, seemed to shorten, and began to follow the road, obscured from the men on the porch of Mister Thomason's store by a row of old flat white houses as it hooked into town. The boy ran, leapt over the white line and hopped onto the porch, where his father was leaning against a post, a sun-bleached straw hat pushed back on his head.

"Papa, truck coming," the boy said.

"You bring the cigars?" asked Leland.

"Yes, Papa. Truck's coming." And then it was behind him. The boy heard air squeezing the wheels to a stand-still and small bits of its cargo falling to the pavement with the sound of breakfast cereal in a bowl. He put the cigars into his father's reaching hand. Some of the men ambled to the edge of the porch and visored the sun with their hands. The boy turned just as the driver, in denim pants, slid across the leather seat and leaned out the window.

"Where's the Caliban place?"

"Just up the road a ways," answered Leland. "Can't miss it. Looks like three flat white boxes end to end. What you got in back? Rock salt?"

"Don't see where it's any of your business unless the name is Caliban." The men laughed. The driver hesitated for a second, then continued. "But you're right. Just up the road? Three white boxes?"

"You got it," answered Leland. "Salt, you say?"

"That's right, salt. He wants salt. I'm bringing him salt. Just up the road, you say? Flat?"

"What he want all that salt for? You know?"

"No, I don't. He called for it. Ten tons. If he's got the money, I got the salt."

"Oh, he got the money," one of the men said.

"Just up the—"

"That's it."

"Good." He rolled up the window, which being broken would close only part way, slid back across the seat and started the motor. Then he was gone, barreling up the road, swirling dust in the gutters on either side of him.

"That's a damn funny thing for that nigger to be buying," Mister Thomason said. "Ten tons of salt." He was short and his wide mouth contained teeth so large that people said his lips had never been introduced. "Come on, Harry. I got something to show you." He smiled and motioned Leland into the store. The boy followed them. Inside, he reached under the counter and produced a bottle of whiskey and two thick-bottomed glasses. Leland leaned over an urn of pickles. Next to him, the boy stood on tip-toe just able to see a jar of chocolate drops on a back shelf.

"I wonder what he wants all that stuff for?" Leland said aloud, but to himself.

Mister Thomason poured two drinks. "Damned if I know."

The boy waited for the men to say more about Tucker Caliban, for they had met once, the summer before, when the boy stood, his face pressed against the cool window of the store, wishing for some peanuts in a bin just inches away from his nose. He heard footsteps behind him—saw, as he pulled back from the glass, the large black head on the thin body reflected darkly before him. The Negro entered the store and purchased a bag of feed. He started out, but stopped and pointed to the window, speaking to Mister Thomason, who weighed out a full pound of peanuts and poured them into a brown paper sack. The Negro came out onto the porch and stood in front of the boy. "You Harry Leland's boy?"

The boy had been frightened. "Yes, sir," he said by mistake.

"You wants peanuts, Mister Leland?" He shoved the bag into the boy's arms. "Here's peanuts." He turned and climbed into the wagon. He never looked at the boy after that, never smiled or said good-bye, just hit the horse with a piece of knotted rope tied to a short brown stick and drove up the street.

"What he want that salt for?" Leland was asking again.

Thomason shrugged. "Must be good for his farm, else he wouldn't have ordered it."

"Papa, that Tucker, the good nigger, you talking about?" The boy tugged at a loop on his father's coveralls.

Thomason leaned over the counter and spoke to him. "Who told you he's a good nigger, boy? He's as evil a nigger as you'd want to know."

The boy moved closer to his father, who was looking at him strangely. "Who told you Tucker's a good Negro, boy?"

"Nobody," he said into his father's leg. "I just—" He stopped. His father had turned back to Thomason.

"What about another drink?" Leland slapped the counter.

"Why sure, coming up." He grasped the neck of the bottle. "But you got to watch for my wife. She always seems to show up—"

Leland raised his hand and pressed back the words. "Boy, go watch for Missus Thomason. And say 'hello' when she comes." He smiled at Thomason. "Real loud."

The boy went and sat on the floor, pressing his nose against the bottom section of the kick-bulged screening. Behind him the men clicked full glasses and delivered toasts.

"Papa?" the boy said, turning.

Mister Thomason swept the glasses and the bottle off the counter and placed them quickly but clumsily underneath. Both men stood straight and wiped their mouths.

"Papa, Mister Harper's coming."

Thomason laughed nervously. Leland came to the door and put his hand on the boy's head. "Next time say it's Mister Harper right off. You about killed Thomason there." Mister Thomason blushed.

Mister Harper was being wheeled down the center of the street by his daughter, a spinster of fifty-five with straight limp yellow hair. He was late this morning, for usually he appeared at the store porch at eight o'clock, where for twenty years he had held court in a wheel chair as old and awkward as a throne. He was a retired army man, who had gone North to West Point, having been nominated to the Academy by General Daniel Willson, the state's first governor after the Reconstruction. The General had found him, a child crying, his hands gripping the hem of his mother's skirt where she had fallen, shot by a stray Yankee bullet. From then on,

he had treated him as he would have his own son. At West Point Mister Harper had learned to wage the wars he would never have the opportunity to fight, for the War Between the States had come too soon, the Spanish American War had ended too quickly, and the Great War, which left his son in an unknown trench across the sea, was too late. War had given him nothing, but had taken everything from him, and so, twenty years before, he had decided life was not worth meeting on foot and had seated himself in a wheel chair to view the world from the store porch, explaining its chaotic pattern to the men who gathered about him each day.

The men lifted the chair into their midst and exchanged greetings with Mister Harper and his daughter, who had at once started up the street to her house. Mister Harper leaned back and folded fish-skin hands over a small but protruding stomach. "Well, what's happening today?"

"Nothing much," said Leland. "A truck—"

"How's the boy there? I haven't seen him in a good while." He spoke differently from the rest of the men. To the boy, his voice sounded like the locomotive that tight-roped along the river edge beyond the ridge over which the truck had come. He did not like Mister Harper much, was afraid of him, not for anything the man had done to him, but because of what the years between them made them to each other. The boy hid behind his father and pressed his head against the post.

It was nearing lunch time and the men started to vacate the porch, for they knew Mister Harper wanted to be alone while he ate. His daughter appeared soon, coming briskly down the center of the street carrying a gray metal lunch box under her arm. When he finished eating from it, he placed it on the rack under the wicker seat of his chair.

Gradually the men returned to the porch. They stood in small clusters, talking or staring off at birds flying above the low roof-tops.

They all heard the popping of hooves on the pavement and saw Jug Stewart skid into town, pulling his horse to such a stop the steel-rimmed wheels of his trough-like wagon left filings for ten feet. He hopped down from the seat, stumbling in the gutter. "Just seen the god-damnedest thing. Howdy, Mister Harper. I seen the damnedest thing."

"What d'you see, Jug?" Leland smiled. "A herd of elephants?"

The men laughed, but stopped abruptly when they realized

Mister Harper was sitting straight in his chair, his mouth closed and narrow as a crease in a piece of paper.

Jug was short, paunchy, bald, pink and sotted, his face an aging tomato onto which features had been stamped. Very early in life he had taken up drinking as an avocation; now they could no more believe him than lift an autumn pig with one hand. "Driving by there, coming from out home, I seen him, Tucker Caliban that is—this is Gospel truth—tossing salt, rock salt, on his field. When I called him, he wouldn't answer. Just kept tossing. Kept filling this satchel slung over his shoulder from a big pile of salt in his front yard."

"What's that you say—salt?" Mister Harper leaned forward and cupped a hand behind his ear and pushed away a tumble of white hair that foamed over his face like water dividing around a sharp rock in a fast-moving stream. "How long ago'd you see this, Jug?"

"Long as it took me to drive in here." Jug did not think the men believed him. He began to sweat, pulled off his dog-eared black hat, and mopped his naked head with a crinkled yellow handkerchief. "I swear it." He crossed his heart with a tobacco-stained index finger.

"Must be so, Mister Harper," said Leland. "We all seen the truck, heaped up full." The other men nodded.

"I wonder what he could be doing that for?" Jug said. "Must be nuts." Some of the men murmured agreement, but Mister Harper paid no attention.

"Lift me on that wagon," he said. "Jug, you get in back. Leland, you drive. I want to die in bed." Mister Harper pulled himself out of the chair, which rolled back from him, its dry wheels squealing, and spread his arms out like a scrawny lame bird, waiting for someone to help him into Jug's wagon. Most of the men had never seen him on his feet, and immediately, as if an unknown and distant voice on Mister Thomason's store radio had announced the coming of a tornado or worse, the streets were filled with running men. Jug struggled his bulk onto the tail-gate. Other men who had been standing in front of the bar across the way, waiting for it to open, fetched horses without understanding what they were doing, why they were doing it, or where they were going.

The boy, next to his father on the wagon seat, climbed to his knees and cupped his hands around his father's ear so Mister Harper, now being hoisted into the wagon next to them, would not hear.

"Why's everybody moving so quick for Mister Harper?" He drew back and then added. "Especially when he talks so funny."

Leland stared off down the street and thought. "Because he's smart, and he ain't been out of that chair in public for twenty years."

Mister Harper was on the wagon seat now, and the boy moved closer to his father, who whispered to the horse, a red animal with a twisted spine and a bloated stomach that followed the curving pieces of bone like a crooked circus balloon. He headed it out of town, past the rows of stores and houses, past the people who had come out of the stores and houses onto the porches to gape like children at an Independence Day parade. And many who saw—without a word, without explanation—hooked up wagons, saddled horses, hitched teams, started motors, and followed the wagon, gazing mesmerized at Mister Harper.

Near the edge of town the wagon passed low wind-chapped buildings where Negroes dwelled. They, too, watched Mister Harper, hair flailing in the breeze, and put aside what they were doing, stopped talking, and then leaving a proper space formed a line of their own to follow Mister Harper.

A short distance out they passed Wallace Bedlow sitting as broad and black as a coal car on the back of an orange horse about the size of a large dog. As always, he wore the white dinner jacket he had won at the national lumberjack convention. He pulled up short, turned, and joined the head of the Negro line.

The two groups went up the road towards Willson City, the capital, and finally the men saw ahead over Mister Harper's thin shoulders the white farm house, three joined sections side by side, painted the summer before, and behind that the barn, sturdy and faded, and in front the square corral, no bigger than a good-sized parlor, and a gaunt and leafless maple, dead and rotted many years, and the small figure of a man at work in a field that with every wave of his arm took on the gray color of an autumn frost.

They sat at the side of the road in the wagons, the cars, atop horses. They waited for Mister Harper to do something. Elbows jutting from his thin body, he asked Leland and Jug to help him down and carry him to the fence. He said nothing, did not call to Tucker as he would have to any of the men with him or to any other Negro, but instead leaned against the fence watching the man at work, almost respectfully, and smoked his pipe.

Tucker had done a good deal since Jug had seen him and

whipped his crippled horse into town. Across the field they saw him, one small speck of white shirt, for he wore black pants and was himself black and barely discernible against the darkness of the trees enclosing his farm. He ran out of salt and came slowly toward the house and the mound, stepping high over the furrows from habit—there was no seed his feet would destroy; he had planted nothing but death. Then he was close by, his head lowered, and they could see the small features on the large head, the silver spectacles on his flat nose. He seemed no lunatic as Jug had suggested but only quiet and thoughtful, his eyes vacant.

"Tucker?" said Mister Harper softly. "What are you doing, boy?" The men waited for an answer. It had not surprised them Tucker had not spoken to Jug, but they were certain anyone would answer Mister Harper if he had a tongue in his head. Tucker, however, showed no sign of recognition, just filled his satchel. "You, Tucker Caliban." Mister Harper spoke again to his back. "You hear? What are you doing?"

Jug was already on the second rung of the fence, his face red and twisted like a dish rag, when Mister Harper grabbed his arm. The men were surprised that both could move so quickly.

"Let him alone." Mister Harper turned away from the fence. "You can't stop him. You can't hurt him."

"What d'you mean?" Jug stumbled after him, his pride stung.

"He's already started something. You can't stop him now." Mister Harper let Leland help him to the wagon. "Get me back up there. I might as well watch this sitting down."

The Negroes arrived and were grouping at the fence, a short space down the road. The men watched them carefully, looking for something that might help them understand what they were seeing. But they found only a reflection of their own dismay, tempered perhaps with tolerance.

Out across the partially whitened field, Tucker flung the hail-like crystals with the same sweeping motion he had always used in the spring. The men watched quietly as he made trip after trip, filling the satchel and emptying its contents, handful after abundant handful, on the field. The sun curved down toward the trees; when Tucker was finished it was a mere three fingers above the horizon. He came back across the field and tossed the satchel on the exhausted heap, and in the silence of the afternoon, wiping sweat from his face with his sleeve, surveyed his day's work and went into the house.

"Would you look at that?" said Jug. "What a waste of good salt. I bet you could melt a lot of ice with that much salt. Once up in Willson City I saw—" He stopped, for he noticed no one was listening.

The door opened and Tucker came into the yard carrying in one hand an axe, in the other a rifle. He leaned both against the corral fence and disappeared around the house. When he came back, he was leading his horse, an old gray animal with a slight limp, and a cow the color of freshly cut lumber. He opened the gate of the corral and for a minute stared at the animals, petting first one and then the other. Standing a little straighter than before, he took a deep breath, pulled them into the corral and closed the gate, then climbed and sat on the fence with the rifle across his knees.

He shot the horse in the head just behind the ear and sticky blood ran down its neck and left foreleg. It stood dead for a full three seconds, its lids stretched over bulging eyes, took a blind step and collapsed. The cow steamed across the corral at top speed, udders swinging violently. After she was hit, she kept moving until she banged into the fence, bounced back, turned to Tucker with the quizzical expression of a woman who has just been slapped for no apparent reason, screamed and crumbled. Tucker climbed down and looked them over.

Mister Harper sat smoking his pipe. His calmness more than anything upset the men, for they could not understand how he could watch such things without the slightest visible reaction. Mister Loomis, who habitually lounged on the store porch near Mister Harper, looked at the carcasses lying in the corral corners and shook his head. "That's a shame. A real shame," he said. "Them were two fine animals. I might've bought them if I'd known."

Mister Thomason laughed. "Oh shut up. You got to borrow from me to buy yourself a drink. Where you gonna get the money to buy a cow and horse?" The other men took this opportunity to laugh, watching Mister Harper from the corners of blank eyes. He did not laugh and they turned back to the yard—all except the boy, who had buried his face in his father's lap to hide his tears.

Tucker crossed the yard and picked up the axe, which in the late afternoon sun glinted like a single match flare in the darkness. He walked toward the twisted maple. It had once been the southwest boundary of the Willson Plantation, on which his grandfather had been slave and then worker. Now it belonged to him, as did this

land, bought with money he had collected working harder and saving more than any man who watched him. He put his hand on the trunk, feeling beneath it the ridges and smooth places, closed his eyes and moved his lips. Then stepping back one good pace, he cut the tree to the ground. It was old, dry, tired inside, and it creaked like the wheels on Mister Harper's chair. With no trace of anger, or madness, only intensity, he splintered the tree, laid the axe in the dull gray chips, and gathered some of the remaining salt into the satchel. With as tender a motion as he might have used to plant seedlings, he banked the salt around the dead roots. When he was done he went toward the house.

"Say, Tucker?" Wallace Bedlow said. "You planning on growing a salt tree?" The Negroes laughed uproariously, slapping their thighs. Tucker said nothing, and the men from the store porch were more bewildered than ever. They had climbed out of the wagons and cars and lined the fence like birds. Jug's skin was greasy and he reached for his yellow handkerchief and tried to clean his face. "This is crazy," he said. "If one nigger can't understand another, no one can. Maybe we should call someone to come and take him away. He's gone crazy!"

Leland, who had remained in the wagon, took the boy in his lap. "It's his land. He can do anything he wants to it."

The boy sat wide-eyed. The streaks of dirty tears lining his face made him look as old as the man next to him. "Is Jug telling the truth, Papa? Tucker gone crazy? Is that what happened?" Leland could not answer.

The afternoon had crept silently away and now above the corral, where the dead animals collected flies from half the county, and away from the white three-part farm house, and beyond the field, white and vacant, and the trees, tall strips of black velvet trimmed with green, the sun went down like a burning new penny.

Tucker had gone into the house, and now the door opened and the men saw this thin back, a broad sweat stain showing his brown skin gray through his white shirt. He was pulling something heavy.

"Bethrah," he said into the dark rectangle of doorway, "push a little harder." A shove made him stumble back a step.

The men sat up straight, for this was the first they had heard him speak that day. They were surprised it was still a normal voice, a little high perhaps, but still normal. They felt cheated, for they had expected more than ordinary words.

Wallace Bedlow climbed over the fence and went toward the house, removing his white coat, beneath which he wore nothing but a torn undershirt. "You tell Bethrah to stop shoving that thing in her condition. I'se gonna help you, whatever the hell you doing."

"Get out of my yard, Wallace." Tucker was staring up at Bedlow, who was at least two hands taller. "Just turn right around and get."

"You don't want her working hard like that, *now*." Bedlow had pulled up short and had the coat over his shoulder. Its green plaid lining was ripped.

"Man, I realize you is being helpful, but there ain't nothing you can do for me. Get out my yard, please."

Bedlow came back to the fence. Tucker turned to his work and soon the men could see by the left-over light of day he was struggling with the General's grandfather clock.

They all knew of the clock, though few had seen it. Purchased by Dewitt Willson, the General's father, it came from Switzerland to the new house he had built for his bride. It crossed the sea in the captain's quarters of a slaver, wrapped securely in cotton padding. Below, in the hold, crouched in two square feet of darkness, was a black man. In his arms, sharing his space, a boy baby, destined to be the first Caliban, toyed with the chain that fastened his father to the hull. They had bound him as securely as the clock, for he had tried to escape and would try again. They knew that. And he did not disappoint them. In the port city he worked free, was hunted, caught and killed. They realized nothing else could be done. Rather than accept a complete loss Dewitt Willson claimed the baby, carried him on the wagon seat beside him to his plantation. In the back, the clock, still boxed, marked time. The baby grew unnamed until Daniel Willson, born seven years later, gave him the name Caliban. Years passed, the War came and the slaves were set free. Many had run off, but the first Caliban and his son, called John, had remained, working as hard as before. And when the first Caliban reached his seventy-fifth year, the General had given him the clock. It had come to the son, John, who was Tucker's father and drove a matched team for the General, and finally to Tucker, who saved his money and bought the land on which his father and grandfather had worked for other men.

The clock was outside now, standing in the yard still ticking, as it had ticked for over one hundred years, and beside it stood Bethrah,

tall, in the final grotesque stages of pregnancy, looking down at her husband who had gone across the yard and returned with the axe. He raised it and arched it down on the glass protecting the clock's fragile hands. The glass popped and shattered at his feet. He swung until the finely worked steel and imported wood were nothing but scrap metal and kindling.

Bethrah had gone into the house and was coming out with a baby. She carried only the sleeping child and a large red carpet-bag. "Tucker, we be ready," she said. He nodded. He was staring at the pieces of wood strewn in and mixing with the dust. Then he looked toward the corral and beyond to the field, now gray in the late dusk light. The baby began to cry and Bethrah opened her blouse and nursed it until it was asleep again.

Tucker looked at the house. "This is the last," he said. "After this we can go on." For the first time he sounded hesitant and perhaps a little frightened.

"I know," she said. "Let's be about it."

He went inside, leaving the door open. When he came out, he wore a black minister's coat with a blue patch on the elbow. He closed the door gently behind him.

Orange flame climbed the white curtains in the center section of the house, moved on slowly to other windows like someone inspecting a house to buy it, burst through the roof, with the sound of paper tearing, and lit the faces of the men, the sides of the wagons, and the faces of the Negroes.

"Hey," said someone.

"Tucker, your house is burning," said another.

The men watched the blaze and the orange coating it gave the trees across the field. Sparks curled up and then died, dissolving against the dark blue sky. Leland lifted the boy from the wagon and led him to the fence, where they stood watching. After an hour the flames faded, showing here and there tenacious fits and starts on still unconsumed scraps of wood, cloth and shingle. Finally only glowing coals remained, and the rubble of the destroyed house looked like a huge city seen at night from a great distance.

Tucker and Bethrah came toward the fence, and the men thought, but only for an instant, they would say something, a final word of explanation; instead they walked around the wagon and went up the road in the direction of Willson City.

The boy began to cry, pushed through the forest of legs and ran up the road before Leland noticed he was gone. He caught up to the two Negroes and called to them, but they did not turn, stop, or show any sign of hearing him. Now he grabbed at Tucker's coat tail, using it as a rein to halt him.

"Go back, Mister Leland," said Tucker. "Go on back."

"Why you going?" The boy cleared his nose and tilted his head. "You ain't really evil—are you, Tucker?"

Tucker stopped and put his hand on the boy's head. The boy stiffened. "That what they say, Mister Leland?"

"Yes, sir," answered the boy.

"Does you think I is?"

The boy stared into Tucker's eyes. They seemed large and too bright. "I . . . But why'd you do all them crazy things?"

"You young, ain't you, Mister Leland?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you ain't lost nothing, has you?"

The boy did not understand and said nothing.

"Go on back."

Leland had followed the boy, but, seeing the two figures speaking quietly in the silent shadows, had stopped in the middle of the road. He saw Tucker turn, join Bethrah, and disappear, enveloped in the thick night. The boy started toward him, walking backwards as if the blackness would not swallow the two figures as long as he watched. When the boy reached him, Leland said nothing, just put his hand on the boy's shoulder. By now the men had climbed into the wagon and were ready to return to town. Mister Harper had said nothing and would say nothing, and they realized it. They knew something important had happened and they were almost content with that knowledge.

The crippled horse pulled them toward town, leading, as before, two separated groups. Again the boy sat close to his father, but only for warmth. He no longer feared Mister Harper.

JAMES HAFLEY:

'The Monster' and the Art of Stephen Crane

Amid all of the extremely worthwhile attention that has lately been given to Stephen Crane, whose art has now successfully been shown to have avoided both the Scylla of naturalism and the Charybdis of impressionism in its progress from *Maggie* through *The Red Badge* to the achieved fulfillment of the later stories, there has gone almost unnoticed one work of his that is not only important but also as deserving as any other of the distinction of being called his masterpiece; "The Monster" was written in 1897, two years after *The Red Badge* and just before Crane's most famous stories—"The Open Boat," "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" and "The Blue Hotel"—and is like all these works concerned with an examination of American values conducted largely in terms of a paradoxical handling of the appearance-reality motif. It is with the general design of this novelette as a Crane art work that I wish to be occupied here.

"The Monster" is primarily concerned with the moral problem that confronts a rather prosperous and highly respected physician, Dr. Ned Trescott, when his small son, Jim, is saved from death in a fire by Henry Johnson, the Trescotts' young Negro stableman. It is at first supposed by the townspeople of Whilomville that Henry has lost his life in rescuing Jim from the flames, and he is at once celebrated as a hero; when, however, it is discovered that Henry has lost not his life, which Trescott has managed to save, but instead, quite literally, his face—having been horribly disfigured by acids in the doctor's laboratory as he struggled out of the burning house with the boy—and that the experience has cost him his sanity as well, everyone turns against him to insist upon his being ostracized from the community as a monster. Dr. Trescott stands midway between the poles of Henry, who becomes gradually symbolic of "God," and the townspeople; the story ends with Trescott's own ostracism after he chooses to side with Henry rather than with his fellow citizens. The point is simply that Henry—like Gregor Samsa in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*—becomes, once he is understood, a norm according to which it is not he but the whole town that

has lost face and gone mad; the townsfolk are the real monsters, but in a society where their mechanical civilization controls values, Henry appears both monstrous and insane for his godlike virtues. If the story comes to stand upon this paradox, it is because Crane can find no other means of reconciling his American sense of civilization with traditional moral values—the two seem to him hopelessly hostile.

As a novelette—that is, a very brief novel rather than a short story in its form—"The Monster" can best be understood as the imitation of an action, the action "to lose face." This action is itself paradoxical: Henry and the others who lose face in the story ultimately save face; and those who try to save face, however sympathetic one must sometimes be with their problems, finally lose face in the light of Henry's significance. Just as the entire story is an imitation of this action, so also it is patterned by means of analogous imitations of the action on the part of almost every character, a method which can best be shown by selective illustration.

Jim, the Trescotts' son, foreshadows and encompasses the entire action in miniature at the outset: playing in the garden with a toy locomotive, he accidentally destroys a peony and is gently reprimanded by his father, who decides that the child must stop playing with the train for the day. "During the delivery of the judgment the child had not *faced* his father, and afterward he went away, with his head lowered, shuffling his feet. . . . It was apparent from Jimmie's manner that he felt some kind of desire to *efface* himself" (the emphasis is mine). At the end of the story, Jim must save face before his little friends—his own society—by going up to the terrifying monster, Henry, who is seated in the sun with a heavy veil about his head, and touching him on the shoulder; Henry's courage in saving Jim is thus weighed against the child's face-saving "courage" as he dares to approach the monster-savior.

Alek Williams, a Negro paid five dollars a week by Trescott to look after the faceless Henry, saves face by demanding an amount of money more appropriate for a man who, with his wife and children, must go through the horror of looking at the monster: *six* dollars a week. It is bitterly ironic that Alek explains, "for this kinder wuk er man oughter git er Salary," because throughout the story the Negroes, including Henry, pattern their own manners after the whites' in a way that shows up both their own ignorance and the shoddiness of the civilization they seek to imitate.

Reifsnyder, the town barber (Crane doesn't miss the opportunity for a comparison between saving face and shaving face, with all the implications of the barber-shop as a gossip center really no more trivial than any other social order in the town), shows a certain degree of sympathy for Henry; "How would you like to be with no face?" he asks a customer who is complaining about Henry. But he is answered with a remark that reverberates to the edges of Crane's meaning: "You're kicking because, if losing faces became popular, you'd have to go out of business"; and another customer adds that losing face will hardly become popular "if it's got to be taken off in the way his was taken off."

Bella Farragut, Henry's friend who had announced their engagement when she thought him dead of his bravery, loses face completely when he returns to court her sociably after his recovery; unable to look at him, she "threw herself face downward on the floor, while the monster sat on the edge of the chair gabbling courteous invitations."

One can continue in this way throughout the story, noticing how even on the simplest linguistic level the losing of face is imitated again and again. At the end of the story Dr. Trescott "kept his face in the shadow" as he refuses to dismiss his feeling of responsibility for Henry; when Henry dresses pseudo-elegantly, he is accused of wanting "to make a front"; while one Hannigan tries to keep Henry from rushing into the flaming house after Jim, "his face was black with rage."

As that last phrase has in a small way suggested, Crane intermingles his face-saving images with light-darkness images that function both realistically and with obvious symbolic value. Here again there is a paradox, for there are two sorts of light: natural light and man-made illumination. The electric light, suggestive of an imitative civilization, is superficial and deceptive: it "glares," and after all there remain "ponderous shadows in back of the electric lamps." Those shadows are, as much as the fearful brilliance of the fire, the real light, and although people wait for "the truth of daylight," they must, like the little girl terrified by a glimpse of Henry's face, become to some degree aware of a reality beyond appearance; the child screams when "she saw the night," for she represents a member of a society that judges everything by appearance, and that blinds itself with its own mechanical lights to what is real. Thus when Henry Johnson passes the barber shop one of the customers inside observes, "I guess that was Henry. It looked like him."

Again, the burning house, long after it is ablaze within, appears quiet and peaceful from without; and the fire itself is described as if it were a thing of beauty. The acids that burn Henry's face away are "delicate," "jewels," "marvels"; but they are "red-hot jewels," and they "flowed" snake-like, just as the townspeople, morally acid, "flowed" to the scene of the fire.

This conflict between losing and saving face, between appearance and reality, light and dark, impression and fact, is finally one between social and individual value. That is evident throughout the story, but nowhere more artistically than in the seventeenth section, in which Henry, now faceless, makes a social call upon Bella, and the grotesque horror of society is dramatized by Henry's insane attempts to follow a formal code of etiquette. The monster makes "a low and sweeping bow," and speaks with fractured eloquence in what is a ghastly attempt to fuse moral and social graces; he is a "genial monster"—a virtuous man behaving according to the standards of polite society. His effects upon society are revelatory of its true nature: Bella crawls on her hands and knees to evade him; she and her relatives represent a "wreck of a family gathering"; they "bleat," they run, and "at the back of the house, Mrs. Farragut, who was of enormous weight, and who for eight years had done little more than sit in an arm-chair and describe her various ailments, . . . with speed and agility scaled a high board fence." It is urged that Henry be removed from the town, because "you know how a crowd gets"; the prim little children's party in the story is paralleled by the scene in which a "populace," a "mob," of children taunts Henry, who for his part sings hymns, quite unaware of their cruelty. And it is useless to attempt to control the savage mob that society really is: "Even if there are a lot of fools in the world," one of Trescott's friends warns him, "we can't see any reason why you should ruin yourself by opposing them. You can't teach them anything, you know." As he is in "The Blue Hotel"—which might be paraphrased "The Sad Society"—Crane is in "The Monster" convinced that whatever constitutes the goodness of man is not to be found in modern social convention. A factory whistle is what summons the townspeople to the fire, which is significantly shown devouring a painting titled "Signing the Declaration."

Henry, as a perfectly good man, is equated with God rather than with any possibility for strictly human conduct: he is like God totally different from man, veiled from the eyes of man from the

time when "the bandages on the negro's head allowed only one thing to appear—an eye, which unwinkingly stared at the judge"; he is simply an "unwinking eye," jeered at for his "black face and shiny eye" both before and after that interval in which he was thought to have died and to be a "saint": the world is not ready for its saints, nor society for the idea of God. Before the fire, Bella remarks to her mother that Henry is "divine"; after his mutilation, however good he may be, the point is that "he *looks* like er devil," as Alek puts it. Cooped up in a small room while Alek is caring for him, Henry is treated rather like the fearful Old Testament God—Alek's wife "adopted the attitude used always in church at funerals. At times she seemed to be upon the point of breaking out in prayer." And finally there is nothing for the monster to do but turn "its black crêpe countenance toward the sky . . . waving its arms in time to a religious chant," while the children who stare at him are "transfixed by the solemnity and mystery of the indefinable gestures." In the same way an indefinable—and therefore horrifying—face has replaced Henry's social mask after his act of selfless love. "Humankind cannot bear very much reality"—that line of Eliot's articulates the theme of this story, and the central theme of all Stephen Crane's work. The very word *monster,* one recalls, is derived from *monstrum,* a divine portent of misfortune; and it is frightening as well as amusing to remember that the editor of *The Century,* rejecting this story for publication, explained that "We couldn't publish that thing with half the expectant mothers in America on our subscription list!"

Thus far I have been trying—using relatively few of the hundreds of illustrations the story affords—to indicate how Crane has characteristically patterned the action of "The Monster" and dramatized its theme. Now I should like to look in somewhat more detail at a few parts of just one section, the first, in order to suggest how Crane everywhere organizes his details into microcosmic patterns that duplicate the over-all pattern which is the whole story. This section concerns, as I have said, little Jim's destruction of a flower with his locomotive. More specifically, "little Jim was, for the time, engine Number 36"—he is identified with the machine, the symbol of senseless power—and the flower that he destroys is a peony. Now the peony, a plant used in medicine, was named for the god of healing: Trescott, who is first described to us simply as "the doctor," is himself broken in the course of the story. Physi-

cian heal thyself is especially suggested here when one realizes that later the old judge warns Trescott that the Negro whose life he has managed to save "will be your creation, you understand. He is purely your creation." Trescott answers, "He will be what you like, judge," but what the judge and the townspeople like is hopelessly different from what the doctor must like after Henry has saved his son; Trescott's capacity for moral sensitivity, his response to Henry's act, places him, then, in the position of the peony at the opening of the story; and it is his son, Jim, who is finally responsible for, the engine of, his insoluble problem. Jim tries to revive the peony, "but the spine of it was hurt, and it would only hang limply from his hand. Jim could do no reparation." And neither can the doctor when he has tragically healed Henry and thus paradoxically healed himself.

While Jim is playing, "the doctor was shaving [the] lawn as if it were a priest's chin." That figure pretty well releases its own significance in view of such succeeding events as I have earlier mentioned; but one can notice also that it represents in miniature what later the whole story will represent—the absurd effect of any attempt to fuse social and moral values into a whole, or to reconcile their bases. When Jim calls to his father, the doctor stops his mowing, "and with the howl of the machine no longer occupying the sense, one could hear the robins in the cherry-trees arranging their affairs." Nature has its own order, and yet the true human being, as in *The Red Badge,* is powerless to follow this order, precisely because he *is* a human being. "Nature has very evidently given . . . up" the peculiarly humane qualities of humanity, just as certainly as society has done so, and the solitary man, the private person, is left to deal with them as best he can, either by following them to virtual isolation or by quitting them for his social self—sacrificing communion for the sake of community. "I guess you had better not play train any more to-day," Trescott says, and at the end of the story he and his wife, Grace, are left to themselves in a room that has been prepared for a party of guests but that is filled only with shadows; it is the gospel feast to which all invited guests sent their regrets, and although we are told of Trescott that "his eyes grew used to the shadows," what he also sees—for he is man not God—are the untouched teacups that surround him.

Yet when one compares "The Monster" with Crane's other works one recognizes that it is not the pessimistic outcry which at

first it may seem to be. If Crane believed anything he believed that man's acceptance of social responsibility is the means, and the only means, for his personal fulfillment as individual: In *Maggie,* Maggie's brother Jimmie is himself the social cause of his sister's downfall and death because he waves aside his momentary visions of himself behaving to other girls as Maggie's lover has behaved to her; in *The Red Badge* the battle is unnamed and unimportant in itself, but is at the same time vitally important as the social act by means of which Henry Fleming realizes himself as an individual; similarly, and with a kind of Conradian irony, in "The Monster" Trescott's act of social responsibility (like Henry's saving Jim) is, at the very time that it destroys him, his one means of becoming fulfilled as an individual human being, as something more than an engine or a chattering robin.

One may suggest finally that Crane's vision of society, a romantic vision, is uniquely American and points toward his important position in the American literary tradition. Crane's fiction is filled with protagonists who declare independence by social acts of no social consequence whatsoever: "You can't teach them anything, you know," the judge tells Trescott. Like the reporter in "The Open Boat"—and, notoriously, like Crane himself—Crane's heroes have to learn through experience only; yet the end of that experience is always a vision of themselves alone, themselves as unique, never a vision of others, or one that is communicable to others. Society, the possibility for experience, is thereby *meant* to be worthless, and valuable only because it is without value.

> A man said to the universe:
> "Sir, I exist!"
> "However," replied the universe,
> "The fact has not created in me
> A sense of obligation."

That man of Crane's famous little poem is each of Crane's heroes; he is Henry Johnson, saving Jim; he is Dr. Trescott, saving Henry—yet each saves only himself—he is the achieved American as Crane came through his art to understand the American; and if his tremendous announcement creates in the listening universe no sense of moral responsibility it is nonetheless both beautiful and supremely important because, wrung only from this meaningless battle he has fought, it is what after all makes him "a man."

FREDERICK BOCK:

The Murder

Sun stood like blood's billboard afar;
But when among those snow-capped piles
Of car-parts only a few spires
Yet glistened at the ends of aisles,
Blood still sang like a guitar:

There's no mouth here to put a berry in,
Nor scarlet lips to purse or speak—
A perilous whispering more thin
Than winnowed from a wild bird's beak.

And smaller gouts, to their steamy end,
Even from the hammer that struck the blow,
Cried chill as air's indwelling hue:
Why stay where snow and wind are twined
And not run flaxen in a round vein?
For no way might they understand.

But listening birds pulled tight the pale
Knot ends of sky where evening hung
And fled up alleys of flung-out suds
In search of languider portfires—

For now that vagrant smoke past hoods
Of rusty iron climbed mountain-weather:
This living is hard on the new-bled;
The snow flies faster, faster;
Yet strive we will to live ennobled
Ever as snow's master—
And hearing alive that misty feather
The color of humbled marigolds,

Cold ruts took frost-lost heart again:
Why not leap crazy and pretty and stain
A fairer cheek than snow? But snow
Fell with its dawking white
On ends of shame

Till scarcely could be heard ascending
Through the fallow flow of death
The least frail task-work still assailing
Breath. Then snow said, *End!*

Sound me no more your speaking lack!
You miserable let blood, decease!
Look on the milling skies and apprehend
The common prophylactic for cerise!
End, end!

And blood, as far as it was able
To remember hand or office,
Set forth to feel if that hard ground
Grew sties of tenderness. For the end
Had come.

And yet above the ice-licked boom
Of the derrick where Night perched
With purple eye and crest,
Still would a trailing cry protest
Its thinning doom—

For with the voice of a withered ghost
While houses clutched the world's side,
The shivering blood in the uppermost
Called to the blood buried:

Live—live on—oh, live!

ROBERT MUSIL:

The Flypaper

Translated by Felix Anselm

The flypaper *Tangle-foot* is approximately 36 centimeters long and 25 centimeters wide; it is covered with a yellow poisonous glue and comes from Canada. When a fly alights upon it—not especially out of greed, more out of convention because so many others are already there—he sticks to it at first only with the tiny horizontal ends of all his legs. It must be a vaguely strange feeling, as when one is walking in the dark and suddenly steps upon something with naked feet—something that is nothing yet but a soft, warm, indistinct resistance and yet already something which assumes a horrible human quality, gradually recognizable as a hand that somehow lies there and begins to take hold with five ever more perceptible fingers.

Then they all stand artificially straight, like tabetics who don't want you to notice their condition, or like rickety old soldiers (and a bit bandy-legged, as if standing on a sharp ridge). They give themselves a bearing and collect strength and thought. After a few seconds they're determined and begin, as hard as they can, to buzz, trying to take off. They continue that furious activity until exhaustion forces them to stop. Then follows a breathing spell and a new attempt. But the intervals get longer and longer. There they stand and I can feel how perplexed they are. Confusing vapors are rising from below. Like a little hammer the tongue comes out, testing. Their heads are brown and hairy as if made from a coconut; like negroid totems. They rock back and forth upon their held and twisted legs, bend their knees and prop themselves up like people straining to lift a heavy load; except that they look more tragic than laborers, more true in the athletic expression of extreme effort than Laocoön. And then there always comes the same strange moment when the need of the present second wins out over all the powerful instincts of self-preservation. It is the moment when a mountain-climber voluntarily relaxes his grip because of the pain in his fingers, when someone lost in the snow lies down to sleep like

a child, when a man running for his life stops to clutch his throbbing sides. Now the flies are no longer holding themselves up with all their might to stay clear of what lies beneath, they are sinking in just a little bit, and in that moment they're almost human. Immediately they are seized on a new spot, higher up on the leg, or on the back of the body, or at the end of a wing.

After a little while, when they have overcome the shock and take up their struggle for life again, they are already transfixed in an unfavorable position and their movements become unnatural. They lie with outstretched hind legs, their weight upon their elbows, trying to lift themselves up. Or they sit, reared up with stretched-out arms, like women who try in vain to wrest their hands out of a man's fists. Or they lie on their bellies, heads and arms extended, as if fallen while running, only the face still in the air. Always, however, their enemy is merely passive, gaining only by their desperate and confused moments. A nothing, an "it," draws them and takes hold of them—so slowly that one can barely follow, and usually with a sudden acceleration at the end when the last inner breakdown overcomes them. Then all of a sudden they let themselves fall forward on their faces, ahead of their legs; or sideways, with legs drawn out; or lop-sided, with legs paddling backward. Thus they lie there. Like fallen airplanes with one wing pointing at the sky. Or like dead horses. Or with interminable gestures of despair. Or like sleepers. Even a day later one sometimes wakes up, gropes with a leg for a while, or buzzes a wing. Sometimes such a movement goes through the whole field and then they all sink still a little deeper into their deaths. And only on the side of the body, where one of the legs is joined, they possess a very small shimmering organ that keeps on living for a long time. It expands and contracts, one cannot point it out without a magnifying glass, it looks like a minute human eye that incessantly opens and closes.

CHARLES H. SHATTUCK:

The First Book on Brecht

JOHN WILLETT: *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht. A Study from Eight Aspects.* New Directions.

Nearly three years have passed since the death of Bertolt Brecht—time for the tumult of his living to subside—so that even the more partisan of his contemners and admirers may be ready to welcome the informed and unheated appraisal of his dramatic work which John Willett provides us in *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht.*

Brecht was always a storm center because he was at once an artist and a social revolutionary, and being caught in the struggle between Russia and the West he declined to commit himself wholly to either side. Politically he was an avowed Marxist, and in the last eight years of his life, handsomely subsidized by the Russians, he directed the largest and most creative theatre operation in the Western world—The Berliner Ensemble. The Russians were glad to have him (in Berlin, that is), presumably as cultural window-dressing, but both politically and artistically he was at odds with the Communist Party Line. His Marxism, which he had learned in Germany in the late twenties, had taught him to ask questions and raise doubts, and he declined to peddle propaganda. He was a sceptic and teacher of scepticism, not a Party errand boy. And to the end, the habitual posture of the Communist critics was to denounce his work as socially irrelevant, negative, and unhealthy. In his art he perpetuated the principles of Viktor Shklovskij's aesthetic system called Formalism, which had been ruled out by Stalin and Zhdanov as long ago as 1934. As Mr. Willett makes clear, the very hallmark of Brechtian theory, the notorious Verfremdungseffekt, was derived exactly from Shklovskij's Priem Ostannenija, or "device for making it strange." Furthermore, Brecht was unalterably hostile to the hypnotic illusionism of Stanislavsky and his method, which is the only theatre method allowable under the Communist code of "Socialist Realism." Had he been within the Soviet ambience in the late thirties, with all these heresies on his head, he would certainly have joined Meyerhold in

his mysterious descent into nowhere. No Russian producer in the last thirty years has dared or cared to produce one of Brecht's plays. "It is a curious case," says Mr. Willett, "of a consequential Marxist pursuing for some three decades methods which lead straight away from official Marxist aesthetics."

Militant anti-Communists, on the other hand, have been as shrill in denunciation as the Party Liners. Arthur Koestler accuses Brecht of "intellectual dishonesty"; describes for us as typical of his work *Die Massnahme* (1930; for once a genuine Communist propaganda piece, but so "intellectually honest" in its dissection of the problem of individual against Party that the Communists never dared use it) and, blithely skipping over all Brecht's important plays, assures us that Brecht "has remained faithful to this day [1954] to his party and his creed: 'sink into the mud and embrace the butcher.'" Herbert Lüthy (*Preuves,* March, 1953; *Encounter,* July, 1956) vilifies Brecht as if he were a Clement Scott in the old days out to murder an Ibsen, calling him a literary thief, a "mystifier of genius who thoroughly delights to mislead," a dealer in blasphemy, dissoluteness, "sadistic day-dream," "rhetoric of decomposition," "cynical sentimentality," "vapid popular-Marxist twaddle," the "secret odour of heresy, sedition, decadence, formalism and objectivism," et cetera, et cetera.

When Brecht died, the eulogizers took over. We must also be saved from Brecht's friends. In an obituary essay in the *Observer,* Sebastian Haffner told us that Brecht was, "despite Schiller and Kleist, the greatest dramatist Germany has ever produced," "the nearest equivalent to Shakespeare ever to appear anywhere—indeed, if one believed in the transmigration of souls, one could be tempted to think that he was Shakespeare reborn."

While this sort of hysterical tub-thumping went on, the English-speaking theatre remained generally indifferent to Brecht or hostile to him. I remember, for instance, when Mr. Charles Laughton, who knew Brecht well—had worked with him long and intimately in translating and producing *Galileo*—received a copy of "A Little Organum for the Theatre" with a thunderous Laughtonian snort. His words were to the effect that "Brecht was a great poet and a great playwright, but his ideas about acting were damned nonsense." As for Brecht's plays, Mr. Willett records Sir John Gielgud's naive assumption that they were mere "scripts" in appendage to a doctrine: "and it might be interesting to see a performance of one of them." One of the directors of H. M. Tennent Ltd. once told me that he

could not interest himself in producing Brecht in London because "I don't hold with art for art's sake!" All that is left of Brecht's *Threepenny Opera* in the current advertisements of the New York production is "an English libretto by Marc Blitzstein." Poor B.B.!

By now, to be sure, the Berliner Ensemble has visited London, and there have been English productions of Brecht at the Royal Court Theatre, the Theatre Workshop, the Royal Academy, and on the BBC. In this country, owing largely to the indefatigable labors of Eric Bentley, there have been half a dozen or more professional productions in the environs of Broadway and countless productions in school and university theatres. The "Blitzstein" *Threepenny Opera,* which has been running for years, though a sadly watered-down version of the play and the songs, has at least established a popular vogue, which reaches from music schools to juke boxes, and has made possible the issuance of splendid new German-language recordings of the best Brecht-Kurt Weill collaborations.

For Brecht's plays to become really viable in English we need more good translations to add to the small store already given us by Messrs. Vesey, Bentley, Laughton, and Nellhaus. But we need also more information and interpretation of the sort Mr. Willett offers. The first sixty pages are a handbook to the *oeuvre.* Forty completed plays are described, with bibliographical and productional statistics, and there are notes on about thirty unfinished plays or plays in which Brecht's collaboration was minimal. Here, and throughout the book, there is a very generous display of photographic illustration. One could wish that the descriptions were more extended (*The Good Woman of Setzuan* is covered in seven lines!); and that Mr. Willett (who is English) had canvassed America more carefully for details of stage history (I can recall at least a dozen productions which are not mentioned). Mr. Willett has paid little attention (though this is perhaps not the place for it) to Brecht's literary sources or the use he has made of them, nor to the labyrinthine interweavings of his own work, whereby characters, songs, and motifs keep reappearing from one play to another. But at any rate he has reconstructed the "skeleton" of the *oeuvre* in such a way that one can add notes to it hereafter.

The discursive portion of the book, which consists of eight essays analyzing the dramatic work under such headings as subject-matter, language, theatrical practice, theory, and politics, likewise has its disadvantages. It would have been helpful if our "first book"

about Brecht had adopted the more pedestrian system of describing the works in fuller detail and in biographical order. Mr. Willett assumes in the reader a considerable experience with the texts; and, though most of the chapters are packed with information and vivacious in style, the novice who seeks here an introduction to Brecht is likely to be more confused than gratified.

In a few pages of the first chapter Mr. Willett vividly recreates the milieu of anarchic freakishness out of which emerged those wild and whirling plays of Brecht's first decade—from *Baal* to *A Man's a Man*. Middle-class morality had failed in post-war Germany, and the rowdy crew of lively entertainers with whom Brecht was associated took their stance in a wasteland of mud and excrement, brandishing "bad taste" and lawlessness to *épater le bourgeois*. The theatre and the other lively arts became preoccupied with prize-fighting, boozing, jazz, soldiering, wrestling, beggary, whoring, rape, and murder—the backroom and gutter life of the shocked German cities. A queer corollary of this cult of violence was the rise of a "spurious Anglo-Saxon mythology," as Mr. Willett calls it—a half-loving and half vengeful, insanely lurid vision of "dark London" and bloodthirsty "Amerika," in which the British Orient, the Chicago stockyards, Alaska, New Orleans, Miami, Alabama, Pensacola, and the like provided symbols of mingled atrocity and romance. The Western orientation included for Brecht a lifelong interest in English literary subjects, from Shakespeare to Kipling, and the setting of many of his plays in wholly fantasticated scenes in England, India, and America.

It is customary among the half-informed to label Brecht a "writer of the Expressionist school," a phrase which only breeds despair in the mind of the reader who knows anything about Brecht and about German Expressionism. Mr. Willett nicely disposes of this folly. Brecht greatly admired Wedekind, who died in 1918, but the leading practitioners of Expressionism in the war years and after—Sorge, Kaiser, Toller, Hasenclever, *et al.*—bored and exasperated him. However he may have respected their political attitudes, he regarded their art as emotional self-glorification, escapism, pretentiousness, windy rhetoric—a vitiating throwback to the hollow tromboning of the German classical tradition. His own first play, *Baal,* a rowdy and dirty account of a vagabond poet who drinks, fights, murders, seduces women, and dies alone in a woods as an enemy of society, is said to have been written in protest to a sentimental Expressionist

play called *The Lonely One.* In 1922 he lost his first directoral assignment because he told the actors, experts in the inflated style, that "all their work was so much crap." The bloated emotionalism he was here objecting to was, of course, perpetuated by the Nazis, and as late as 1948 we find him still protesting "that revolting convention which demands that the actor should tackle any fairly long verse passage by, as it were, pumping himself full of some emotion which will roughly cover the lot." From the beginning he declared his preferences for the vulgar, the dirty, and the humorous as against the sonorous approach: for the farces of Ivan Goll, dialect comedy, street ballads, Kipling, Villon, the films of Charlie Chaplin. For a time he almost abandoned the theatre in favor of boxing and wrestling matches, because the prize-ring exhibited a clean, hard, explicable, meaningful craft, uncolored by sentiment; because the ring was lighted with white light, so that the work done in it could be perfectly seen; because the spectators smoked (i.e., "thought") as they watched. The *Threepenny Opera* may be taken here as a handy reference. Every point in it—every sour joke, every irony, every moral inversion, every comic brutality, every parody of sentiment—may be regarded as a deliberate riposte to the prevailing Expressionist mode.

About 1927 Brecht began to discover in Marxism, as Shaw had done forty-five years before him, that "science of doubt" by which he was confident that his impoverished and miserable, ill-fed and criminal world was to be "remade." About 1930 he discovered Arthur Waley's translations of the Noh drama and in the Claudel-Milhaud opera of *Christophe Colomb* a satisfying imitation of the art of the Noh. Here was the method he needed for the didactic drama of his next period: a stripped-down anti-theatrical form of theatre art. In such "teaching pieces" as *He Who Says Yes, Die Massnahme, The Exception and the Rule,* he abandoned the theatre proper for the classroom and lecture hall. He got rid of scenery altogether: a bare platform, plain dress, white lights, and musical instruments were all he required. Hardly any action was called for beyond the symbolic (Oriental) walk around the stage. Language was shorn of all metaphor, colored words, jokes. Nothing remained by way of decoration but the music, which itself, whether by Weill, Hindemith, or Eisler, was Spartan, unlavish, severe. He called these plays "propaganda in favor of thinking," each of them a tender of his faith that the economic and moral world could be

remade through incessant and fearless questioning. Having demonstrated in *He Who Says Yes* that the death of an individual may be necessary for the good of the community, he reversed the field in *He Who Says No* and showed the necessity of saving the individual, in spite of "old custom," even at the cost of derisive laughter and charges of cowardice. Every situation must be examined anew, he tells us, and no laws or customs are ever final. "Here is the theme of all Brecht's later writing," says Mr. Willett, "and the key to his dramatic theories."

Concerning the later writing — the great plays which Brecht created during his exile, such as *Galileo, Mother Courage, The Good Woman of Setzuan, Puntila, The Caucasian Chalk Circle* — Mr. Willett's treatment is disappointingly sparse. He posts a good many topics about them: the new warmth in them that followed after the slackening of political and intellectual tensions, the persistent sympathy with the underdog, the shabbiness and healthy vulgarity of the typical "heroes," the interdependence of morality and money, the beauty of goodness and friendliness, the impracticability of goodness and friendliness, the recurrent use of "double" characters and of unresolved endings, the steadily more relaxing and pervasive sense of humor ("God spends all day long laughing at himself"). These and many other suggestive topics are hung on pegs, as it were, but none of them is developed beyond a brief paragraph, to the effect that they seem at times rather like jottings for a book to be written later on.

The discussion of certain Brechtian techniques, both as playwright and as producer, is more rewarding. Mr. Willett can describe well (what we rarely can sense through translations) the rich textural variety of Brecht's maturest style, in which simple prose can lift into heightened prose by subtle rhythmical allusion to religious or literary classics, or broken and jazz-rhythmed free verse can slide over into either dignified blank verse or parody of romantic (Goethe-Schiller) bombast, or into rhymed couplets or quatrains, or allusion to Kipling, Whitman, Villon, or cabaret song. Music meant much to Brecht—indeed, he began his career, like a Woody Guthrie or Pete Seeger, as a balladist—and he used music in every play for incidental or total underscoring of his texts. According to Ernest Borneman (*Kenyon Review,* Spring, 1959), Brecht was responsible for all the musical ideas in his works, using his composers merely to arrange them. Mr. Willett does not state so extreme an opinion,

but he shows clearly how Brecht kept a tight rein on the music, so that it would do its vital work and not steal the show. He insisted on sparse development, small orchestral ensembles, and singers who could sometimes prevent themselves from singing and simply "speak against the music." He thought that totally developed opera was an "idiocy" because the solid reality of the text was "all washed out by the music": he called it "culinary opera," whose elements "are cooked to a common mush," and he felt that his own *Mahagonny* went too far in the "culinary" direction.

Brecht's productional techniques, which, as Mr. Willett observes, are rather more widely known and talked about than his plays, are properly set in perspective as the revolt of a modern German against the clamorous emotionalism of the German stage tradition. Brecht's insistence on specific clarity of the "chain of events" in a play, as opposed to using plays as mere excuses for outbursts of "temperament"; his avoidance of cliché and stereotype in casting; his techniques for "cooling the actors down" by, for instance, making them speak their lines in third person and indirect discourse; his attention to blocking and grouping; his preference for gray and drab colors and for white lighting; his enormous affection for very real properties with a "used" look connoting the labor of human hands—all these and other stage practices Mr. Willett treats with perhaps more thoroughness and coherence than he does the plays. And he is careful to emphasize that none of Brecht's theoretical dicta, laws, slogans, and devices are to be taken as final; that, indeed, a slavish imitation of them will probably lead other (and especially non-German) producers into mere quaintness and affectation. The important things to express on the stage are "seriousness, fire, jollity, love of truth, inquisitiveness, and sense of responsibility," and these qualities and the main techniques for expressing them are to be found in the plays themselves. Nothing in Mr. Willett's book is more valuable than his insistent reference to the plays themselves.

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